

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

# **Madison River Citizen Advisory Committee**

## **FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

**May 13, 2013**

### **Madison River Citizen Advisory Committee**

Robin Cunningham, Gallatin Gateway

Joe Dilschneider, Ennis

Bob Gibson, Bozeman

John Juracek, West Yellowstone

Lee McKenna, Helena/Ennis

Philip Naro, Bozeman

John Way, Ennis

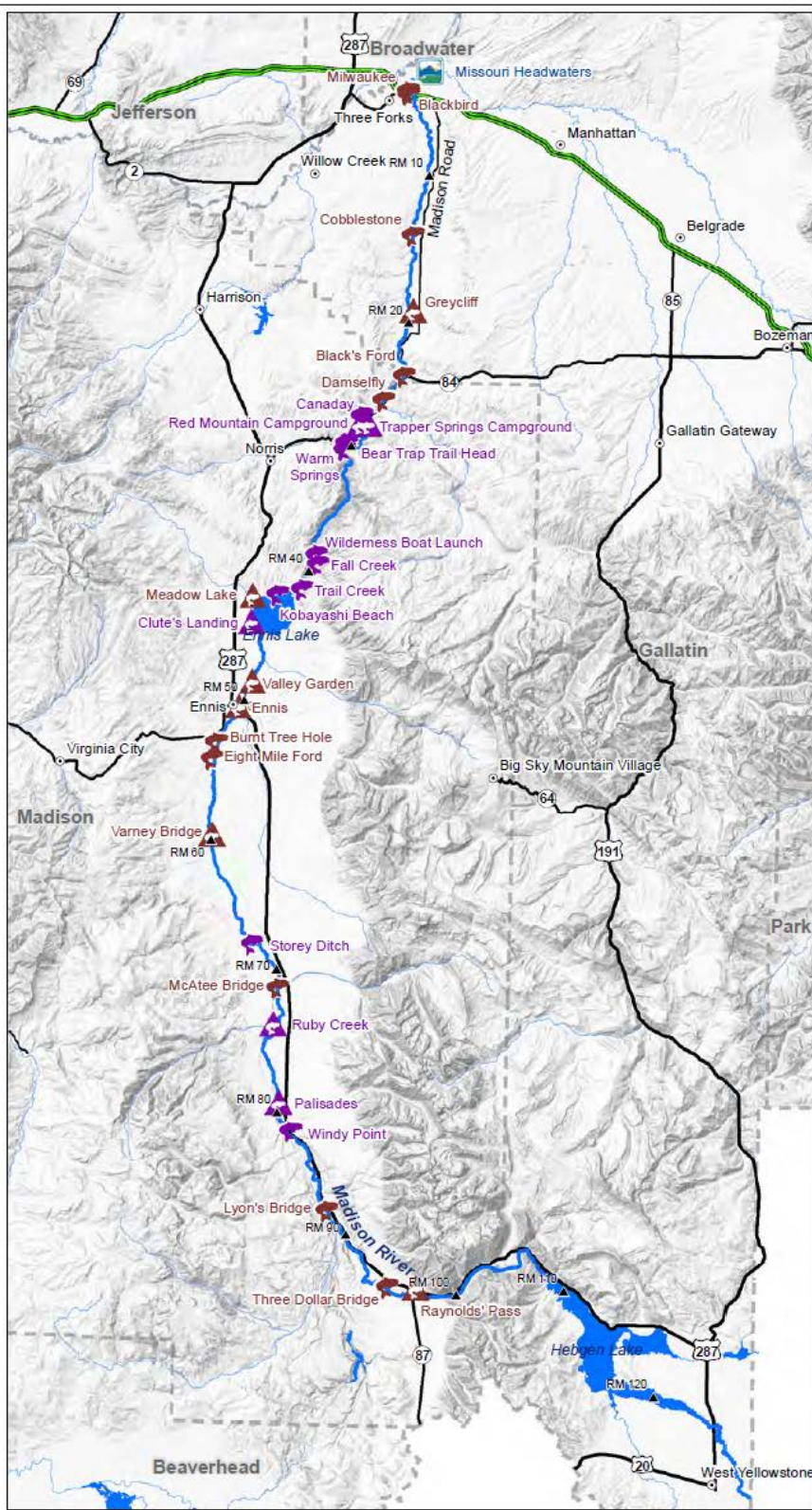
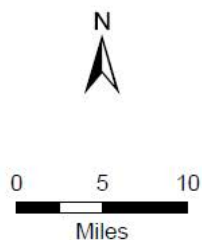
#### *Agency Representatives*

Pat Flowers, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Chris McGrath, Bureau of Land Management

# Madison River

- ▲ River Mile
- FWP Sites**
  - Day Use
  - Campground
  - State Park
- BLM Sites**
  - Day Use
  - Campground



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# **Madison River Citizen Advisory Committee Recommendations**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This document contains recommendations based on terms of the convening Charter (see Appendix) and tasks assigned by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to the Madison River Citizen Advisory Committee (MCAC). The 7-person committee met 10 times from May 2012 to March 2013 and completed recommendations for the entire river and for specific river sections. The recommendations are a product of FWP's River Recreation Management Guiding Principles, the member's representative "interests," and their deliberations based on the following assigned tasks:

- Assess river recreation information and existing conditions on the Madison River.
- Identify desirable or acceptable recreation conditions for the Madison River.
- Develop a list of management actions (less restrictive to more restrictive).
- Identify conditions that would warrant implementation of management actions.

## **INTEREST-BASED PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESS**

The MCAC used a facilitated, "interest-based" process as described in the River Recreation Management Planning Manual. In this process, issues are discussed on the basis of merit rather than on personal position, bias, emotion, or opinion. Using this process, the committee reached consensus on nearly all recommendations. The process applies the following principles, and those principles establish the process steps:

1. *Separate the person from the defined problem.* Identify the specific, substantive questions that have to be effectively answered in the process.
2. *Address interests, not positions.* Identify interests of those at the table, those missing, and any broader community interests.
3. *Create solutions for mutual gain* – with the group making sure the proposed solution addresses the identified "interests" of the involved parties.
4. *Use fair standards/objective criteria.* Evaluate proposals and come to agreement based on what the group agrees are guiding principles and fair standards/objective criteria - rather than opinions, personal values, or bias.

The goals of an interest-based process are: (1) Identification and clear understanding of the involved "interests"; (2) *Options* to achieve *mutual gain*; (3) *Legitimacy* based upon guiding principles, fair standards/objective criteria; (4) Productive, collaborative *communication* within agreed-upon ground rules; (5) *Relationships* developed from collaborative discussion; (6) *Durability* of outcome; (7) *Demonstrated commitment*.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The MCAC affirmed the guiding principles in the FWP River Recreation Management Planning Manual and added the following:

- Use levels should be the consideration that drives management action decisions, not types of use/user (who it is).

## **INTERESTS**

At the beginning of the process, the MCAC identified and mutually clarified the following “Interests.” They are:

### **OVERARCHING RECREATION INTERESTS**

- Preservation of the beauty of the Madison River and quality of the recreation experience.
- Proper stewardship of the Madison River by users and Managing Agencies in order to protect the resource, while still maintaining and accommodating a full spectrum of recreation activities.
- World-class fishing and floating experiences and enjoyment for all.
- Good management actions, defined as: technically and socially feasible, legal, affordable, measurable, and enforceable so they can be effectively implemented.
- A river that is free of litter.
- A public that understands and values river recreation etiquette.

### **GENERAL ANGLING INTERESTS**

- Continue the mystique and lore of “the Madison” – even in modern times - as a “world class fishing experience”. There was no consensus as to an exact definition of “world class fishing experience.” However, the MCAC identified the following as elements that many people would describe as part of a quality experience: a healthy resource that allows anglers the opportunity to catch a sufficient number of decent-size fish per trip; little congestion at the boat ramp and on the water; convenient boat ramp access with reasonable wait times; good etiquette (as noted in the desired conditions) demonstrated by all river users at the boat launch and on the river; adequate parking; tranquility, majestic scenery, and a clean, cold-water river.
- River access is available for wade and float anglers.
- Keep the upper Madison garbage-free. Reduce garbage on the lower Madison, particularly the stretch between Warm Springs Recreation Area and Black’s Ford FAS.
- Educate the public to value and demonstrate river recreation etiquette.
- Encourage all users to make thoughtful choices to reduce congestion and pressure during the peak of the season (June through September), e.g. fishing at less popular fishing access sites, or fishing at times other than 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

### **COMMERCIAL/ECONOMIC/LOCAL COMMUNITIES’ INTERESTS**

- A healthy resource; no dollars or fun can be had if the Madison becomes degraded.
- Measurable standards for recreational use impacts on water quality and fish populations because a healthy resource is essential to the commercial fishing businesses and to the economy of local communities.

### **MANAGING AGENCIES’ INTERESTS**

- Promotion of public safety.
- Protection and preservation of the resource for present and future use and enjoyment. Reduction of user conflicts.



- Management of the river which allows a variety of quality recreational and educational opportunities.
- Development and maintenance of safe, convenient recreation facilities that balance public demand, protection of resources, and fiscal responsibility.

## **OVERALL DESIRED CONDITIONS FOR THE MADISON RIVER**

MCAC members described the overall desired conditions for the Madison River as follows:

- A healthy and productive fishery.
- An accepted frequency/range of encounters among users; adequate space defined as *“not feeling unreasonably encroached upon by another user.”*
- No garbage - 100% packed in and packed out.
- Maintain reputation as a “world class” fishing experience for anglers.
- Adequate access and parking.
- Ongoing education about safety, emergency measures, and water conditions, etc., resulting in educated users.
- Problems/issues identified quickly and correctly by Management Agencies, and addressed successfully.
- The implementation of the least amount of regulation/management actions necessary to protect the resource while allowing all users to enjoy the river. The MCAC recognized that some regulations/management actions could affect certain user groups more than others and stressed that, when possible, any such regulations should be tailored narrowly to address specific problems so that everyone could continue to use the river.
- All user groups understand and are considerate of the needs and interests of others and use appropriate ethics and etiquette (e.g., picking up litter is the norm, not the exception; people maintain appropriate distances from other users for each activity).
- The Madison River fishery and recreation experience is maintained based on current conditions.

## **GENERAL RIVER-WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS TO BE IMPLEMENTED IMMEDIATELY**

The following actions apply to the entire river and should be implemented immediately or as soon as practically possible. These management actions are justified by current conditions; the need to establish a baseline number of users, use type, and user satisfaction; and the need to determine whether current conditions contradict any of the River Recreation Management Guiding Principles.

- **Collect accurate recreation data for each section of the river.**
  - Collect accurate data for each river section by installing “iron rangers” at all FWP, BLM and other public access points on the entire river (an iron ranger is a hollow steel tube that is placed in the ground and contains a slot for depositing forms, survey instruments, fee envelopes, etc.). FWP will design a survey specifically aimed at querying users about river-stretch specific information including: user-type, use-level, and user-satisfaction.
  - These data will be collected year-round. All users will be required to complete the ‘survey’ document and deposit it in an iron ranger. Wade anglers would complete and deposit the survey in the iron ranger nearest to the area they are fishing. Float anglers

- would obtain the survey at the launch site, and deposit the completed survey at the take-out site.
- Data collection instruments should be designed to obtain specific user demographics and use levels according to place and time of year on particular river stretches. These data will allow for monitoring and evaluation of changes to the desired condition in that section in a timely manner and will aid future advisory committees in identifying problems and recommending management actions.
  - The first three years of data will be used to establish a baseline for use numbers and user satisfaction. The data will also be used to refine data collection needs in future years.
- **Conduct annual survey of Special Recreation Permit Commercial Users.**
    - Require all SRP holders to complete an annual survey gauging overall social conditions/satisfaction levels. This survey is to be returned with existing permit report forms.
  - **Develop and implement effective education and outreach efforts.**
    - Education should be ongoing and address:
      - Why river-stretch specific data are needed and why the iron ranger surveys are mandatory.
      - User etiquette at FAS and on the river.
      - How to keep river and its banks free from trash.
      - Why and how the fishing/recreating public/commercial community should readjust their expectations and actions during peak fishing periods (June - September) to protect the resource and increase opportunities for a quality recreation experience, (e.g., expect high use levels during summer season, adjust fishing times accordingly).
  - **Monitor impacts from glass bottles river-wide.**
  - **Evaluate effectiveness of management actions.**
    - If new management actions are applied, they should be tried for 2 years and evaluated for desired effect before progressing to another action/set of actions. (Evaluation should consider exceptions such as acts of nature; emergency situations; weather events, etc.)
    - Change in actions should be done in a transparent and open public process.
  - **Promote timely completion of work on Hebgen Dam.**
    - FWP should work to influence a more timely completion of work to repair the bottom release of water on Hebgen Dam so river conditions can return to “normal” (i.e. bottom of dam water releases) and any management actions will be considered/applied within that “normal” context.

## GENERAL RIVER-WIDE THRESHOLDS (STANDARDS)

The MCAC identified general conditions that may warrant the implementation of management actions. This can also be referred to as “Thresholds” (Standards) that could “trigger” a management action.

- Threshold for number of users: The established baseline for number of users (to be derived from the data collected by the mandatory surveys at the iron rangers) is exceeded by 10% for two (2) successive years.
- Threshold for user satisfaction: The user satisfaction levels (to be derived from the data collected at the iron rangers) fall below 80% satisfaction for two (2) successive years.
- After a management action(s) has been implemented, if the number of users drops and remains 10% *below* the threshold/standard over a 4-year period (number of users no longer exceeds the threshold), FWP will evaluate those management actions in place and determine whether they are still warranted and/or whether other actions should replace them. Similarly, after a management action(s) has been implemented, if user satisfaction improves and remains 80% or greater over a 4-year period, FWP will evaluate those management actions in place and determine whether they are still warranted and/or whether other actions should replace them.

## RECREATION MANAGEMENT ACTIONS: LEAST TO MOST RESTRICTIVE

- FWP should analyze data collected from iron rangers and other sources (e.g. angling pressure survey and annual SRP commercial use survey) to identify appropriate management actions for achieving desired conditions using the least restrictive management actions before proceeding to more restrictive management actions.
- MCAC discussed various "least to most restrictive" management actions including:
  - Redistribution and/or suppression of the number of users;
  - Displacement/reversing displacement of users;
  - Restricting users on when/how/where they might use the river.
- The MCAC recommends that when social crowding data indicates that an established threshold on a particular section of river has been exceeded, FWP should consider the following "least to most restrictive" management actions:
  1. Identify/evaluate additional access sites and site design.
  2. Require all users to obtain annual permits for using stretches of the river or the entire river. Permits would be unlimited. Require all floating users to carry the permit on their craft. Commercial users would get their permit as part of their SRP registration. (Note: the MCAC did not agree on whether a permit should initially be free or have a minimal cost, i.e., \$ 2.00 – \$5.00, - with the basic intent of the permit being a tool for mild suppression of use to decrease crowding).
  3. Add mild impact to permits (e.g., if initially free, add a nominal annual fee (i.e., \$5.00); if not initially free, mildly increase the fee. While numbers of permits remain unlimited, set deadlines for getting the permit.



4. Add “place and time” restrictions such as seasonal openings/closures, time of day; specific days, etc.
5. Cap numbers of users and define how use will be allocated.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPECIFIC RIVER SECTIONS, INCLUDING FISHING ACCESS SITES**

### **RIVER UPSTREAM FROM HEBGEN RESERVOIR (YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK TO HEBGEN LAKE)**

This stretch of the Madison River flows approximately 2 miles from the Yellowstone National Park boundary northwest to Hebgen Lake through the north flats of the Hebgen basin. This is primarily a wade fishing section with some “float to fish.” Access is limited. There is moderate local fishing use in the spring and fall, and low use the rest of the year.

#### Desired Condition for this Segment of the River

The Madison River fishery and recreation experience is maintained based on current conditions and use types.

#### Actions to do now

The MCAC believes that this section of the river generally functions well. The MCAC recommends that the General River-Wide Recommendations be implemented here immediately.

### **HEBGEN DAM TO QUAKE LAKE**

This short stretch of river (approximately 2 miles) between Hebgen Reservoir and Quake Lake is primarily a wade section with some use of kick-boats (i.e. or similar craft) to access fishing opportunity. Access is good from the road. Angling use is high during the spring, summer and fall.

#### Desired Condition for this Segment of the River

- The Madison River fishery and recreation experience is maintained based on current conditions and use types.
- Education of anglers to protect the resource and obey fishing regulations, including those which restrict the number of fish that can be harvested.
- Number of users does not reach a point that negatively impacts the river.

#### Actions to do now

The MCAC recommends that the General River-Wide Recommendations be implemented here immediately. Several members of the MCAC and the public were concerned about reports that over-harvesting of fish occurs in this section of the river during the fall and spring spawning seasons. The MCAC deemed this to be a law enforcement issue and recommended that resources be deployed during the spring and fall to enforce existing fishing regulations.

### **QUAKE LAKE (RAYNOLD’S PASS) TO LYONS BRIDGE FAS**

This 12.6 mile section of river begins at the Quake Lake outlet and ends at the Lyons Bridge FAS. Directly downstream from Quake Lake, the Madison River turns into a whitewater river for 1 mile. The

gradient of the river is very steep, with large boulders and drops scattered all along this portion of the river. The fast pocket water continues for about 1 mile after Reynolds Pass FAS. At this point the gradient of the river decreases and the current slows. The river here is characterized by large riffles with numerous islands, large rocks and side channels. This is a wade-fishing only section with multiple access sites. Regulations prohibit fishing from boats or vessels; float-to-fish is allowed. A low amount of non-angling boating occurs in this section (the primary use is angling). This section has high fishing use in the summer, particularly around Raynold's Pass and Three Dollar Bridge fishing access sites. There is moderate to low use during the remainder of the fishing season.

#### Desired Condition for this Segment of the River

- The Madison River fishery and recreation experience is maintained based on current conditions and use types.
- Recreationists using this stretch of the river are satisfied with the number of encounters with other users and do not feel unreasonably encroached upon.

#### Actions to do now

This section of the river was the subject of intense debate among the MCAC. Some members believed that there were conflicts between wade anglers and boats that warranted immediate action; other members believed that this area functioned well and that continuation of the status quo was desirable. In the end, the MCAC agreed that more specific data was needed and that the General River-Wide Recommendations should be implemented here immediately.

#### **LYONS BRIDGE FAS TO ENNIS (TOWN BRIDGE)**

This is a 30 mile stretch of the Madison River that is characterized by large riffles with numerous islands, large rocks and side channels. The flow tends to be swift and fairly uniform in depth. There are numerous fishing access sites. Wade and float-fishing are the primary uses in this section, with scenic floats and bird-watching occurring less frequently. This section experiences high fishing use during the summer and moderate use during the remainder of the year. This section has the heaviest concentration of float anglers, both commercial and non-commercial, on the river. Lyons Bridge FAS is the most popular FAS for boat launches. During peak season, users have complained about long waits to launch at Lyons Bridge and congestion at the boat ramp and in the parking lot. The river is open to fishing year-round from McAtee Bridge to Ennis Bridge.

#### Desired Condition for this Segment of the River

- The Madison River fishery and recreation experience is maintained at current use levels and use types.
- Recreationists using this stretch of the river are satisfied with the number of encounters with other users and do not feel unreasonably encroached upon.
- Those launching crafts are satisfied with their wait time and experience.
- All users demonstrate appropriate etiquette at the boat launch and on the river.
- River aesthetics are valued and protected with no trash in/around the river.
- Access sites in this stretch of the river are garbage-free, have adequate parking, clean bathroom facilities, non-hazardous boat ramps, and useful signage, etc., that helps educate all users.

### Actions to do now

The MCAC identified this river stretch and several fishing access sites within this stretch as areas that needed specific, immediate action. The MCAC recommended that the General River-Wide Recommendations be implemented here immediately. The MCAC also made the following specific recommendations for this stretch, to be implemented immediately or as soon as practical:

- Redesign the Lyons Bridge FAS to alleviate congestion.
- Improve maintenance of the 8 Mile Ford FAS dirt road through the peak season (May through September).
- Refurbish, realign the boat ramp at the Varney FAS and clearly delineate parking.
- At the McAtee FAS, create a gate in the jack fence on the south side of the parking lot to allow wade anglers access to public land.
- Educate the public to expect high use on this stretch during peak times and to adjust accordingly.
- Open the river to year-round fishing from Lyons Bridge FAS to McAtee FAS.

The MCAC also identified “Least to Most Restrictive Management Actions” that could be implemented from Lyons Bridge FAS to McAtee FAS if conditions exceed the threshold/standard:

- Identify/evaluate additional access sites and site design.
- Require all users to obtain an annual permit for using this stretch of the river. Permits at this point would be unlimited. Require all floating users to display the permit on their craft for this stretch. Commercial users would get their permit as part of their SRP registration. (Note: the MCAC could not agree on whether the permit should initially be free or have a minimal cost associated with it (i.e., \$ 2.00 - \$5.00) - with the basic intent of the permit being a tool for mild suppression of use.)
- Changing river conditions could result in lesser or more restrictions on the permit.
- After a management action(s) has been implemented, if user numbers drop and remain 10% *below* the threshold/standard over a 4 year period (user numbers are no longer exceeding the threshold), FWP will evaluate those management actions in place and determine whether they are still warranted and/or whether other actions should replace them. Similarly, after a management action(s) has been implemented, if user satisfaction improves and remains 80% or greater over a 4 year period, FWP will evaluate those management actions in place and determine whether they are still warranted and/or whether other actions should replace them.

### **ENNIS FAS TO ENNIS LAKE (DAM)**

The river is slower and shallower in this stretch and branches into numerous braided channels. Ennis FAS (also known as “Town Bridge”) is the last take-out on the upper river for float fishing. Boats are allowed to float down to Ennis Lake but no fishing is allowed from boats (this is a wade fishing and “float to fish” only section). There is some limited use of boats to gain access to fishing locations. Public access to this section of river is limited; Valley Garden FAS is the only other FAS in this stretch. Use is moderate in the summer and low the remainder of the fishing season. There is some wildlife/bird watching that occurs in this section.

#### Desired Condition for this Segment of the River

- The Madison River fishery and recreation experience is maintained based on current conditions and use types. Recreationists using this stretch of the river are satisfied with the number of encounters with other users and do not feel unreasonably encroached upon.
- River aesthetics are valued and protected with no trash in/around the river.
- Fishing access sites in this stretch of the river are garbage free, have adequate parking, clean bathroom facilities, non-hazardous boat ramps, and useful signage, etc., that helps educate all users.

#### Actions to do now

- The MCAC recommended that the General River-Wide Recommendations be implemented here immediately.
- Make the Ennis FAS and Valley Garden FAS a priority for maintenance early in the season (typically April).
- Improve maintenance of the Valley Garden FAS dirt road through the peak season (May through September).

#### **ENNIS LAKE TO WARM SPRINGS RECREATION AREA**

This 9.8 mile section of river flows through Bear Trap Canyon and features Class III to Class V whitewater, which makes it popular for rafting and kayaking. BLM is the primary management agency for this section of the river. Regulations allow fishing from boats and wade-fishing. Access is limited; most access is gained by hiking along the banks. Fishing use is moderate in the spring and fall and low during the summer.

#### Desired Condition for this Segment of the River

- The Madison River fishery and recreation experience is maintained based on current conditions and use types.
- Recreationists using this stretch of the river are satisfied with the number of encounters with other users and do not feel unreasonably encroached upon.
- River aesthetics are valued and protected with no trash in/around the river.
- Users recognize that 9 miles of this stretch of river are within the Lee Metcalf Wilderness Area and that the Wilderness has its own management regulations.

#### Actions to do now

The MCAC recommended that the General River-Wide Recommendations be implemented here immediately.

#### **WARM SPRINGS RECREATION AREA TO BLACK'S FORD FAS**

This 6.5 mile stretch on the lower Madison River contains some deep runs in the upper reach but turns into broad shallow riffle sections in the lower reach. It is very popular for recreational floating during the summer (innertubes, rafts, etc.). The high volume of non-angling use presents management challenges unique to this section of river, including littering, parking along the highway, high alcohol consumption and driving under the influence, undesirable behavior, and other public safety concerns.

This stretch is open to wade fishing and fishing from boats. There are numerous access points and fishing use can be high during the spring and fall, and lower in the summer.

#### Desired Condition for this Segment of the River

- The Madison River fishery and recreation experience is maintained based on current conditions and use types.
- This river stretch is managed and patrolled to increase safety related to high volume, short duration, recreational floating use.
- Reduction or elimination of driving while drinking/intoxicated; excessive alcohol consumption on the river; improve general public safety; and issues associated with parking on the roadside.
- Reduction of garbage. (The MCAC recognized that during peak season, it would be virtually impossible to completely eliminate garbage in this section.)
- Adequate parking at the access sites, clean bathroom facilities, non-hazardous boat ramps, and useful signage, etc., that helps educate all users to achieve and maintain desired conditions.

#### Actions to do now

- The MCAC recommended that the General River-Wide Recommendations be implemented here immediately. In addition, the MCAC recommended that the following specific recommendations be implemented immediately: Allocate FWP and BLM resources to develop and implement strategies that:
  - Educate the fishing/recreating public/commercial community about the mandatory data collection and why this information is important.
  - Educate users about specifics related to garbage/littering; recycling; and free mesh reusable garbage bags available at the site.
- Prohibit glass bottles on this stretch of the river.
- Add recycling bins at Blacks Ford FAS.
- Continue the “Adopt-A- Access Site program.
- Facilitate partnerships among BLM, FWP and other entities (i.e., Trout Unlimited; Madison River Foundation; REI; college groups; service clubs, etc.) in conducting monthly clean-up days during June, July and August.
- Allocate resources to increase/improve FWP/BLM law enforcement presence/patrols during peak user seasons.
- Implement a “no tolerance” response to parking violations on site – resulting in towing as the first consequence.
- Work with the counties to develop/put in place a “no tolerance” response to parking on the roadside – resulting in towing as the first consequence.
- Monitor and improve the Canaday and Warm Springs Recreation Areas and Black’s Ford FAS.

#### **BLACK’S FORD FAS TO HEADWATERS STATE PARK/THREE FORKS**

This stretch of the river is 24.4 miles in length. The upper part of this reach is generally a single main-channel, with larger islands and deeper pools in the lower part of this section. Regulations allow wade-fishing and fishing from boats. A limited amount of recreational (non-angling) floating occurs here.

This is a fairly remote section of the Madison River with limited access. Fishing use is low to moderate throughout the year.

Desired Condition for this Segment of the River

- The status quo is preserved - with no increased access - as this area is highly regarded for its solitude and wildlife viewing.
- The Madison River fishery and recreation experience is maintained based on current conditions and use types.
- Recreationists using this stretch of the river are satisfied with the number of encounters with other users and do not feel unreasonably encroached upon.
- River aesthetics are valued and protected with no trash in/around the river.
- Fishing access sites in this stretch of the river are garbage free, have adequate parking, clean bathroom facilities, non-hazardous boat ramps, and useful signage, etc., that helps educate all users

Actions to do now

- The MCAC recommended that the General River-Wide Recommendations be implemented here immediately. Monitor any potential plans by Gallatin County to pave the county dirt road that provides access to the area.
- Monitor Black's Ford FAS for needed improvements.



## **APPENDIX: MADISON RIVER CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE CHARTER**

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks is developing a plan for managing recreation on the Madison River. The plan will focus on *recreation* management rather than *resource* management with the understanding that resource protection is of highest priority. The members of the Madison River Citizen Advisory Committee (MCAC) serve by appointment of the FWP Director and are tasked with developing recommendations for managing recreation on the Madison River.

The MCAC's assignment is to prepare a Committee Report on recommendations for managing recreation of the Madison River. FWP will invite the public to comment on the Committee Report. FWP will prepare a Draft Management Plan and environmental analysis based on the work of the Committee and public comments. The public and the Committee will be invited to comment on the Draft Plan and environmental analysis. The FWP Commission will adopt a Final Plan based on the recommendations of the Committee, comments from the public, environmental analysis, and input from staff.

The FWP statewide river recreation rules apply to the process of developing management plans or rules for river recreation. The MCAC's recommendations must comply with these statewide rules. According to the rules, management plans and rules must be technically and socially feasible; legal; affordable; measureable; enforceable; and reasonable to administer.

The MCAC's recommendations should reflect the interests of its members, the public that recreates on the Madison River, and those affected by river recreation management. It is imperative that the MCAC use a process that encourages civility, trust, and respect. Listening to and integrating each person's interests is paramount to success.

The MCAC serves in an advisory capacity. While the role of the Committee is critically important, there is no guarantee that the Final Plan will follow the Committee's recommendations. The FWP Commission is the final decision-maker and shall consider the recommendations of the MCAC, the best available information, the environmental analysis, and input from the public and staff.